1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

133 island. On the east side there are precipitous cliffs either dropping straight to the shore or leaving just enough space on the beach for [36] a row of native huts, fronting the open sea. A reef skirts this coast also, but close inshore.

131 The island of Buka is about thirty-five miles long, and eight or 133 nine wide at the widest part, narrowing very much at both ends. 137 Its most northerly point extends almost to latitude 5° S., its longitude being 154° 40′. The interior of the southern half of the island is covered with thickly forested hills, formed of dolomitic limestone, fairly steep in places but of no great height, dotted with native villages. The northern half is flat, and its interior is used by the natives principally for their gardens, the villages here being confined to the coast. There are no rivers on the east side, but on the west the coast-line is broken by several small streams and one larger river, the Gagan, formed by the junction of two streams about a couple of miles from its mouth. It is lined by mangrove [136] swamps full of crocodiles, and provides the natives with abundance of river reeds to use for thatch in default of sago-palm which is rather scarce.

133 Bougainville is one of the largest of the Solomon Islands, about 160 miles in length with a width of 35–40 miles. This book is concerned with the inhabitants of its northern shore. At 'The Passage' the land is almost flat, but as one passes westwards there is a gradual rise, till about ten miles from the western end the cliffs have reached a height of perhaps 200 to 250 feet. They consist of dolo- [417] mitic limestone, dropping steeply to the sea, but climbable in many places with the aid of notched logs at the steepest parts (see Pl. 2 *a*). They are covered with vegetation wherever a crack or a crevice enables the smallest amount of soil to accumulate. A coral reef comprising many species, but largely composed of a variety of Hexacorallia,[1] lines the shore. At its outer edge great breakers crash incessantly on all but a very few days in the year, making it an exciting business to launch a canoe through the surf. Owing to the difficulty of approaching it by sea, this portion of the coast [361] offers little inducement to white settlers, and is occupied by a string of native villages, among them Kurtatchi, my head-quarters for nine months. Towards the north-eastern corner of the island

[1] For the identification of this and other geological specimens which I brought home I am indebted to Mr. C. J. Bayzand, University Demonstrator in Geology, Oxford.

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

137 many other shrubs, a large variety of ferns and mosses, and in-
[262] numerable fungi, some of which are eaten. Creepers and epiphytes of all kinds abound, but there are fewer orchids than are reported from other islands: a small white variety is the most common. The
[487] abundance of rattan and other thorny plants makes progress through uncut bush a slow and sometimes painful business, and as a path that is little used very soon becomes overgrown, no one ever goes any distance into the bush without a knife.

The bush is disappointing in its lack of colour. It is all too green. Not only are the flowers few and far between—partly owing
[30] to the fact that a native will never pass a flowering shrub without taking his toll of its blossoms to put in his hair—but the birds and
●136 the butterflies also are less brilliant than I had expected. There are some bright red and blue parrots, and the cockatoos, dazzlingly white in the sunshine, are conspicuous amid the foliage, but otherwise the birds are not striking, except the hornbill, with his extraordinary yellow beak and the whirr of his wings, which is one of the most characteristic sounds of the forest. There are several varieties of pigeon, called in imitation of its plaintive note, *kūrō*, and numbers of small birds, of which the most noticeable is a species of wagtail. Butterflies, though very large, are mostly black or brown, flecked or striped with white, but there is also a very beautiful black one with small iridescent bluish-green patches on its smaller wings.

The bush abounds with life, but nearly all the creatures are of small size. The largest animal is the wild pig, which if you meet it is usually far more frightened than ferocious, unless it is wounded, or has young. The cuscus opossum, or phalanger, which lives in the holes of hollow trees, attains to about the size of a large cat. Flying foxes in great numbers keep up their short sharp bark nearly all night, and what with them and the frogs, and some insect of the grasshopper tribe (called by the natives *nen-nen*, because its note sounds like these syllables repeated in a high-pitched voice), the bush is never silent except perhaps for an hour or so before dawn. Iguanas and all kinds of small lizards are
[825] plentiful, and there are also snakes, whether poisonous or not I cannot say. The natives are afraid of them, and kill them on sight, if possible, by beating them with a stick. The large coco-nut-eating land-crab (from Guppy's description I take this to be *Birgus latro*) is an odd sight. These natives do not eat it, as do others elsewhere,

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

These natives do not eat it, as do others elsewhere,

but they amuse themselves by catching one and trailing it round the village on the end of a string, to a chant of 'Tin-tin-tarum, tin-tin-ta-a-a-a-a-rum'.

The only domestic animals are dogs and pigs. There are no transport animals, no cattle, and no sheep. A horse was imported during my stay for the use of the priest; it caused great excitement among the Kurtatchi people, who called it *wōs*, having no *h* in their dialect. The dogs, every variety of mongrel, are valued in proportion to their prowess in hunting, and are kept on short rations to make them fierce. The domestic pigs are of the black-skinned, long-snouted variety, and do not differ in appearance from the wild pigs that roam the bush. They are known to their owners individually, are treated as pets, and come to be fed when called.

PERSONAL APPEARANCE OF THE NATIVES

In the present volume only a brief general account of the personal appearance of the people will be given, as their racial type will be discussed in detail in another publication, in conjunction with the analysis of my series of physical measurements and observations.

The natives of Buka and North Bougainville differ in several respects from their near neighbours, the inhabitants of the south-eastern Solomon Islands. The most obvious difference is in the very much darker skin colour of the northern group, of whom the majority are as nearly black as human skin ever attains. Some individuals, however, possess skins of a somewhat lighter colour with a slightly reddish tinge; this is much admired. The eyes are invariably dark brown. The hair is either black or very dark brown. It usually stands out from the head in a frizzly mop, like that of the natives of New Guinea, but less striking because it is kept shorter. If left uncombed and uncut, as in the case of boys who have not finished their puberty ceremonies, it hangs in a series of tight ringlets and may reach below the waist (see Pl. 29). Curly and wavy hair is sometimes seen, and occasionally hair that is almost straight. Facial hair is sparse and bristly. I did not see any natives with a full beard, but some keep a little hair on the upper lip. The majority depilate their facial hair by means of a shell (probably a species of *Tapes*, Pl. 38, no. 7), either a single one used like a razor, or a double one used like a pair of tweezers. They

[i.e., the large, coconut-eating land-crab (*Birgus latro*?). – Analyst]

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

to be exacted of the small boys until they are old enough to go fishing seriously. 857

Most of the active games seem to be played in rather desultory fashion, nothing in the form of sports or contests being organized. A good deal of running after one another goes on, of course, but I never saw children racing, or playing anything which could be compared to our 'Tag'. A form of 'Hide-and-seek' is played mostly by adults. The children like to tear about the village waving flaming-sticks or torches made of coco-nut palm leaves, and though the risk of fire must be considerable, nobody ever says: 'Don't.' 857 526

The children of Petats, where there is a good sandy beach, and, usually, a smooth sea, at least on the 'lagoon' side of the island, were always in and out of the water. Even the four- or five-year-olds were good at diving, going in either head or feet first, or in a kind of squatting posture, clasping their knees, but from no great height (Pl. 14*b*). They get a very good elastic swing to a standing dive. They swim under water for some distance, with a movement of the hands close to the body, palms facing backwards, and do not seem to mind the sharks, which I have sometimes seen quite close to them. It may be that these sharks are harmless, but man-eating sharks are sometimes heard of, and accidents are known to occur. The children's light-coloured palms and soles show up very strikingly beside their dark bodies through the transparent water. The village of Kurtatchi, standing as it does on the top of a steep cliff with a rocky beach and the breakers of the open sea below, offers little inducement to indulgence in water games. The small children there did not go into the sea, except for walking through pools in the reef at low tide. The older boys and men occasionally bathed in the surf, some used surf-boards to ride the rollers, the boys wearing the *upi* looking very odd as their head-gear bobbed up and down. The native word for surf-riding is *tsitsir*, and descriptions of it occur in some of their stories of times past, including one involving the famous 'two brothers'. 481 526 857 [36] [538]

Both boys and girls are excellent tree-climbers, but this is done chiefly to get coco-nuts, areca-nuts, or opossum, not merely as a sport. They climb with the aid of a band of fibre round both feet. There is, however, a game in which the boys set up a dead tree in the earth, or, more often, in the sand of the beach, swarm up its trunk, and try to balance themselves on the highest branch that will bear them, egging each other on to go up higher on to a smaller 481 857 526

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

other 17 in. in length and 3 in. in width. Both large and small ones are considered to be male, and each bears the name of the *urar* whose voice it is supposed to be. Thus one of those I saw at the *wapi* ceremony was called Buwō, another Upitomet, another Tororon.

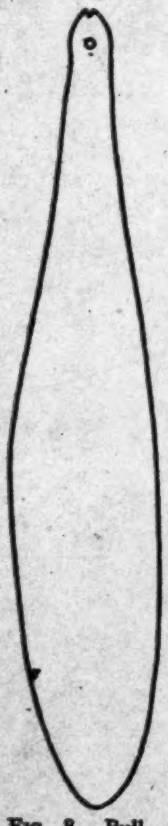

FIG. 8. Bull-roarer.

There is also a subsidiary instrument which is regarded as female. It is made by splitting open the stalk of a bush banana leaf, propping the two sides apart with a bit of stick and fixing the flat part of a leaf into the gap. By blowing upon this leaf in a certain manner, a sound is produced which resembles the wailing of women. The instrument has no name; they say: '*Mon to biom non*' (the woman is crying). The Hahon people of the mountainous hinterland make it in a different manner, by taking a canarium almond which has had its nut extracted by a *karib* (a species of tree rat) through a hole which the animal makes with its teeth at one end. They blow into this hole, thus producing a similar noise. These instruments are used to impress the novices while they are sleeping in the bush. One man sounds it on one side of their shelter, another sounds it from another direction, another in yet another place. The boys think it is their mothers wailing for them, and are frightened, not knowing what is going to happen to them. These female instruments are not sacred, and are thrown away when they have served their purpose, but no one would make one for me.

CEREMONIES SUBSIDIARY TO THE *WAPI*

Several days after the *wapi*, there is a ceremony involving the mothers of the novices (*tʃina'upi*) and the *amro*. As usual in matters of time, it was impossible to obtain exact information as to the length of the interval that is allowed to elapse. Its purpose is to allow the novices to become accustomed to managing their extremely awkward head-gear. This ceremony is called *watog* (*wa-* causative prefix, *tog* = barter). The novices take no part in it, but remain still secluded in the bush until the following day.

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

II. *Regulations concerning food.*

When they first put on the hat, the boys may not eat opossum, but this prohibition is removed as soon as their hair has grown a little. It may be, though it was not stated by my informants, that this taboo has arisen because the cuscus opossum has very short fur, with the idea that if they were to eat the animal before their hair had grown beyond the length of the fur, it would never attain greater length than this. Even after they are permitted to eat opossum, it must be cooked in an oven; they may not touch any 'possum meat that has been roasted in the embers or boiled in a pot. Pig is allowed them cooked in any fashion.

Fish may be partaken of freely, cooked in any manner, except that certain specified kinds are totally prohibited. These are: *karawa*, *sosoa* (garfish), *toro*, *poa*, and *usey*. I could elicit no reason for the prohibition of these particular fish. They are not rare, neither are they especially highly prized as articles of food. It is noteworthy that there is no prohibition on the eating of bonito.

The boys may eat fruit, except a certain variety of banana called *masōn*, the fruit of the banana palm used in the girl's first menstruation ceremony. The relation between bananas and sexual matters has been referred to in another connexion—it is because of this that the fruit is prohibited to the *upi* boys.

There is also a taboo upon the eating of canarium almonds, until a ceremony has been performed whereat the boys are given nuts to eat in public. If this rule is broken it is said that their hair will not grow. I could discover no reason why such a result was supposed to follow. It may be that it was used as a deterrent, and that the taboo is for disciplinary purposes. Since canarium almonds are eaten with the greatest relish by everybody, it represents a very real deprivation; but, on the other hand, nothing was said by any of my informants about the idea of discipline, in discussing the regulations enforced at this stage, though it entered very definitely into the dietary restrictions imposed during the seclusion prior to the *wapi* ceremony, as this was clearly stated more than once in our discussions on these matters. Perhaps one might venture to conjecture that, like some of the Australian food taboos, it may originally have been devised with a view to conserving the supply of nuts for the benefit of the rest of the village. Seeing that the boys of Bougainville do not differ fundamentally from boys